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Commemorating Military and Civilian Families on the Danube Limes

Maureen CARROLL

Introduction

'The Roman family' has developed since the late 1980s as a distinct research theme in ancient social history. Following the initiative of Beryl Rawson in studying the Roman family, six 'Roman Family Conferences' have since taken place. Edited volumes have emerged from these conferences that deal with various aspects of the family, such as marriage, children, divorce, social structure and household composition, but with a focus on Rome and Italy and a general bias towards textual sources (Rawson 1986; 1991; Rawson / Weaver 1997; George 2005; Dasen / Späth 2010)[1]. More recently, an entire conference devoted to the family in Greek and Roman Antiquity took place in 2009 in Gothenburg, its aim being to contextualise and refine approaches to this topic in the twenty-first century (Harlow / Larsson Lovén 2012). By 2012, sufficient research on the ancient family had been conducted to enable the publication of an extensive companion volume, the title of which refers to 'families' rather than 'the family' and to the 'Greek and Roman worlds' rather than 'Greece and Rome' (Rawson 2012). These plurals in the title reflect the diversity of family types and practices in the societies discussed as well as the regional and chronological diversity covered and the development of new approaches and themes.

In the end, however, all these studies focus on the civilian family, rather than on the families and dependents of Roman soldiers stationed along the frontiers and on secondment in provincial towns. The advances in the theoretical methodologies apparent in this research on civilian families, however, can be applied fruitfully to study military communities and the social relationships formed through military and civilian interaction. Important examinations of archaeological and historical evidence, such as those by Speidel (1989) on soldiers' servants, by Speidel (1996) on the tablets from *Vindonissa* and their implications, by van Driel-Murray (2008) on recruitment and women in the Lower Rhine area, and Allison (2006) on mapping for gender in forts in Roman Germany, show some of the methods and materials used to explore the multi-dimensional experience of 'family life' on the frontiers and in the provinces.

My study focuses on civilian and military families and extended households living on the Danube frontier by examining the copious epigraphic and pictorial evidence from the cemeteries outside settlements and forts to gain information on communities and the social relationships formed through military and civilian interaction. Danubian funerary monuments are eloquent in highlighting the importance of children and their role in replicating ethnic and gender values of families in the region. This body of evidence also sheds light on non-kin relations and the dislocation and physical and social mobility of families and households on the Danube. Examples are drawn from sites south of the Danube bend such as *Ulcisia Castra*/Szentendre, *Aquincum*/Budapest, and *Intercisa*/Dunaújváros/Dunapentele, as well as from sites further west in the hinterland

[1] The 2005 volume branched out to include the Roman provinces. The sixth Roman Family Conference took place in Rome in 2012, the papers of which are to be published. Other studies include those by Wiedemann 1989; Bradley 1991; Dixon 1992.

of the *limes* such as *Gorsium*/Tác and *Savaria*/Szombathely.

Roman-style Commemoration on the Danube

The first exposure of the indigenous population on the Danube to Roman funerary commemoration came with the arrival of the Roman army who remembered their dead by erecting stone monuments with Latin epitaphs. These highlighted, in very compact form, names, origins, rank and sometimes relationships to other comrades in arms. In this way, the military marked the different and distinctive identity of the Roman soldier from the local and non-Roman civilian (Hope 1997, 255). A plethora of inscribed gravestones from the late 1st and early 2nd c. AD survive.

The civilian population soon followed suit by commemorating their dead with stone monuments, and by adopting this Roman form of memory preservation they were able to compete in this very Roman form of public display. Erected around AD 100, the *stele* of Adnamata, daughter of Carveicio, from *Intercisa*, for example, is adorned with a wreath in the upper panel (*AE* 1906, 114; *RIU* 1147; Schober 1923, # 113; Nagy 2007, 33, # 16)[2]. This formula had been particularly popular with soldiers of the 2nd legion stationed in *Aquincum* since AD 89; fine examples are the early 2nd c. *stelae* of Gaius Valerius Macer from *Verona* (*AE* 1990, 813; Topál 1993, 11, pl. 6, grave 7) and of Titus Plotius Pamphilus from *Celeia* (*AE* 1936, 163; Németh 1999, 31, # 66). We might also compare the monument of the 14-year-old Sabina (Schober 1923, # 214; Nagy 2007, 41-42, # 29) who was commemorated in *Aquincum* by her parents in the first half of the 2nd c. with that of a cavalry soldier (*CIL* III 3407; Schober 1923, # 259; Nagy 2007, 39, # 25). Both stones are adorned with a funerary portrait in a rectangular niche. An arched niche surrounds the portraits of the 30-year old Veriuga from *Intercisa* (*RIU* 1262; Nagy 2007, 39, # 24) and that of the cavalry soldier Ulpius Enubicus from the same site, both of whom died in the early 2nd c. (*RIU* 1264; Nagy 2007, 38-39, # 23). Veriuga is depicted in the ethnic costume that we know from other Roman funerary portraits in this territory of the Celtic Eravisci (Lang 1919; Fitz 1957; Garbsch 1965; 1985; Facsády 2001; Carroll 2013b, 567, fig. 13.4). She also holds a spindle and distaff, both of these being symbolic objects highlighting marital and familial values rooted in Roman society (Larsson Lovén 2007; Cottica 2007; Carroll 2013a). The Roman funerary monument proved to be a particularly good forum for expressing ethnic affiliations, cultural context and gendered behaviour; it also allowed personal relationships to be advertised and preserved, as the following demonstrates.

Families of Soldiers and Army Veterans

Until Septimius Severus removed the ban on marriage for serving soldiers, they could not have legitimate wives or children (Campbell 1978; Phang 2001). Scheidel (2011) refers to this situation as a 'non-recognition' of marriage, rather than a 'ban'. This did not mean, however, that soldiers did not have common-law wives or sire children, nor did it mean that soldiers had no other family members near their garrisons. On the Danube, as elsewhere, active soldiers who had been recruited locally set up Roman funerary monuments to commemorate parents and siblings. Vibius Saturnus, *duplicarius* of the *Ala I Thracum*, for example, erected a *stele* near *Gorsium* in the early 2nd c. for his father Vibianus, who was the son of a local non-citizen man named Deivo, and for his locally-born mother Atezissa and his brother Valentinus (*CIL* III 15154; *AE* 2004, 1133; *RIU* 1398; Schober 1923, # 261; Nagy 2007, 58, # 50) (**fig. 1**). Each of the deceased is depicted with a funerary portrait. Atezissa wears a wrapped headdress and a long-sleeved tunic and pinafore held on the shoulders by large fibulae, the traditional attire of the Eraviscan women; the men, however, dress as Romans and wear the tunic and *sagum* or military cloak[3].

Once soldiers were honourably discharged and began to settle down with family and dependents on the frontier, the first Roman-style funerary monuments commemorating these relationships begin to appear. The early 2nd c. gravestone of Tiberius Claudius Satto, a 60-year-old veteran of the 10th legion, for example, is a tall, slim *stele* with an epitaph in a frame on the bottom half and a wreath in the upper half, very much like earlier and contemporary memorials for serving soldiers (*CIL* III 15162; Schober 1923, # 109; Németh 1999, 22, # 40). The text, however, reveals a family connection; this man was from *Cambodunum* and his wife set up the monument in *Aquincum* to commemorate him. Veterans also set up commemorative monuments for themselves and their families while they were

[2] For further examples, see: *RIU* 917; Maróti 2003, 15, # 9; and *CIL* III 3381; Schober 1923, # 125; Nagy 2007, 34, # 17.

[3] For the role of dress in expressing ethnic, gender and group identity in self-representation, see Rothe 2009; Carroll 2013b.

Fig. 1. Grave stele of Vibianus, Atezissa and Valentinus from *Gorsium*, set up by Vibius Saturnus, *duplicarius* of the *Ala I Thracum*, early 2nd c. AD. Photo: M. Carroll

still alive. Marcus Aurelius Romanus, a veteran of the 10th legion from Antioch, commissioned a stone for himself, his wife Ateria Sabina, his son Marcus Aurelius Romanianus, and his daughter (?) Aurelia Valeria in *Savaria* between AD 170-220 (*CIL* III 10920; *RIU* 130; Schober 1923, # 72).

It has become clear that the Roman *familia* is much better characterised as a household of differently related individuals, rather than the traditional nuclear family of parents and children (Martin 1996; Carroll 2006, 180-186). Mother, father, aunts, uncles, cousins, slaves, freedmen and others might well live together or at least have very close familial bonds in life and in death. This is no less relevant for

Fig. 2. Grave stele of Mira and Marcus Attius Rufus, veteran of the 2nd legion *Adiutrix*, from *Ulcisia Castra*, AD 130-190. Photo: M. Carroll

the *familia* on the frontier, where it is evident that veteran families included not only blood relatives, but also other dependents and associates. Lucius Naevius Rufus from Milan, and veteran of the 15th legion *Apollinaris*, for example, had settled after active service in the Claudian colony at *Savaria* where he died at 75 in the latter part of the 1st c. AD (*RIU* 145). He and his wife Naevia Lucida are commemorated by his freedman Lucius Naevius Silvanus, indicating that the *familia* comprised also others with whom personal, social and proprietary bonds existed. In fact, freedmen, in particular, play an important role in commemorating not only themselves and their bonds in the *familia*, but also their patron (Carroll 2011). The burial community of the *familia* might also include friends; Masuia and Namio from *Ulcisia Castra*, for example, include their *amicus* Belicus as a co-recipient of their funerary monument (*RIU* 911; Maróti 2003, 11, # 5).

These monuments refer only in their texts to veterans, wives, and sons and daughters, but from the mid-2nd c. we begin to see the emergence of monuments adorned with portraits of family members. Mira, daughter of Crescens, is commemorated in *Ulcisia Castra* by her husband, Marcus Attius Rufus, a veteran of the 2nd legion *Adiutrix*; their young son appears with them (*RIU* 913; Maróti 2003, 20, # 14; Boatwright 2005, 309, fig. 10.7) (**fig. 2**). Although Crescens was probably garrisoned as a soldier in *Aquincum*, the couple must have settled at *Ulcisia Castra* after he was discharged, and here they died at some point between AD 130 and 190. He chose to have his wife shown in the female costume of the Eravisci, indicating that she was of local origin. For himself, on the other hand, he opted for the depic-

tion of the toga, the badge of Roman male citizenship (Christ 1997; Davies 2005).

At *Aquincum*, Aelia Catta commissioned a *stele* to remember her dead husband, Claudius Secundus, and her son, Secundinius, in the second quarter of the 2nd c. (*Tituli Aquincenses* 2010, # 590). The husband was a veteran of the 2nd legion who had been seconded as *beneficiarius* to the senior tribune (*tribunus laticlavius*)[4]. Husband and wife stand in their portrait with their son between them, thereby appearing as the 'classic' nuclear family, although this cannot be taken as an indication that their *familia* was not, in actual fact, larger. Even if the majority of the **dedicants** of Pannonian funerary monuments were parents, the **range** of family members and others named in the inscriptions and portrayed in portraits suggests that familial communities in life and in death were more complex. Saller and Shaw (1984) and Boatwright (2005) argued that the epigraphic evidence for Pannonia confirms the dominance of the nuclear family. More accurately, however, the inscriptions and portraits reveal and visualise multi-generational and extended families organised around a nuclear core[5].

The Importance of Family and Children

One of the most striking aspects of Roman funerary monuments on the Danube is the depiction of large families. These can be found on a number of Pannonian grave *stelae*; the fact that many of the women in these family scenes wear ethnic dress demonstrates that we are seeing an important phenomenon amongst the indigenous population in the region. Here we might cite a *stele* in the first half of the 2nd c. from *Aquincum* that names three women and a little girl with native names (Batta, Ressora, Sisiuna and Verbugia) and shows them all in the full regalia of indigenous dress (*CIL* III 3593, 10544; Schober 1923, # 161; Garbsch 1965, # 106, pl. 12). Familial relationships such as daughter, aunt and niece are highlighted here. An indigenous family, to whom two freedmen set up a *stele* in *Intercisa* around the mid-2nd c., included Demiuncus, son of Coucus, and Angulata, daughter of Campio, both of them apparently living to the age of 100; another sister and a further freedwoman are also named in the inscription (*RIU* 1224; Schober 1923, # 263; Nagy 2007, 54-55, # 46; Boatwright 2005, 298, fig. 10.3). Two women in indigenous dress and a man wearing a *paenula* are depicted.

A group of four individuals are named on a tall *stele* with portraits from *Aquincum* dating to the first three decades of the 2nd c. Valeria Severa, the freedwoman of Valerius Crispus who died at the age of 30, and her free-born daughter Valeria Sibulla, a 5-year-old, are shown in the top row; Flavius Ingenuus and Valeria Aquila are named as heirs, the latter possibly a blood relative or another freedwoman of Crispus (Facsády 2008, 169, fig. 7) (**Fig. 3**). These may be the two figures on the bottom register. Valeria Severa is shown holding a spindle and distaff. These spinning instruments conspicuously displayed on her person send the message that she was adept at working in wool and an industrious wife, or at least she wanted to be seen in this light. Rather than reflect reality in absolute terms, however, funerary portraits such as these might construct ideals (Carroll 2013a). On the Roman frontiers where actively serving soldiers may not have been able to legally marry their local 'wives' until the ban on marriage was revoked in the late 2nd c. and where foreigners without *conubium* could not have valid Roman marriage, women in such relationships in military and frontier communities had to overcome being outsiders in a physical and legal sense. The desire of women in this context to appear as legitimate wives and even Roman *matronae*, at least in death, is understandable.

Furthermore, the special importance of children and the strong bond with them in Danubian families is clear in a whole range of 2nd- and 3rd-century gravestones (Boatwright 2005; Mander 2012). Even the very youngest children still in swaddling clothes, and therefore younger than 40-60 days, can be depicted on Pannonian monuments; this is a rare motif in funerary art anywhere in the Roman empire (Carroll 2013a). A charming portrait of a mother and her swaddled infant is preserved on the grave *stele* of a 21-year-old woman named Flavia Aiulo from *Aquincum* who is clothed in Eraviscan costume (*CIL* III 14352; Boatwright 2005, 313; Carroll 2012, 141, pl. 22; Mander 2013, 97, fig. 81). She was commemorated around AD 100 by her brother and cousin, but there is no mention of the infant or a husband, unless they might have been named on the now missing part of the stone. Another Eraviscan woman named Antistia Firma from neighbouring Budapest also is portrayed as a mother with a swaddled infant on her gravestone (*CIL* III 10539). The inscription names the dedi-

[4] Ott 1995, 27-35.

[5] For recent discussions of the evidence for the nuclear family, see Mander 2013, 65-66.

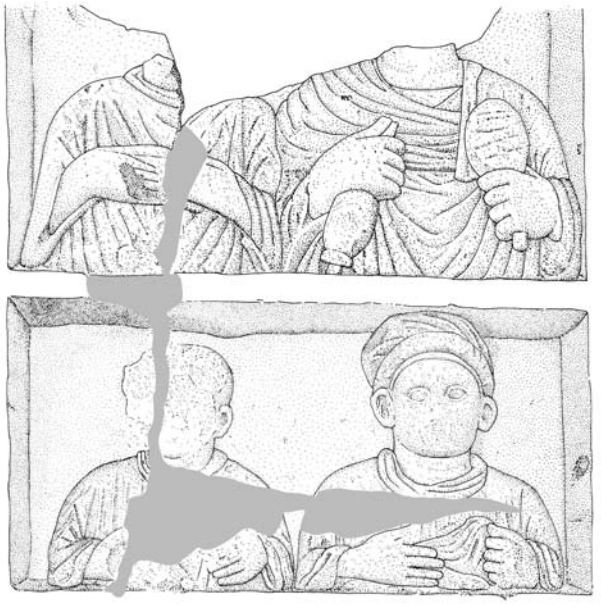

Fig. 3. Grave *stele* of the freedwoman Valeria Severa, her daughter and heirs, from *Aquincum*, early 2nd c. AD. Drawing: I. Deluis

Fig. 4. Grave stele of an indigenous family from *Intercisa*, late 2nd/early 3rd c. Detail of one of the women with her child. Photo: F. and O. Harl, www.ubi-erat-lupa.org (Bilddatenbank zu antiken Steindenkmälern)

cator and her husband, stating that Antistia Firma died at 25[6].

On a family gravestone from *Intercisa*, several generations of an indigenous family are depicted, with husbands and wives in physical contact, but the closest and most tender contact here is between one woman and her child sitting on her lap (Barkóczi 1954, # 172; Nagy 2007, 56, # 49) **(fig. 4**). This mother rests one of her hands on her son's head, and the little boy wraps his tiny fingers around her other hand. As the inscription on this monument has not survived, we cannot be sure whether either of the two men had served as soldiers, but one wears the *sagum*, suggesting that he might have had this connection with the army. His family connections, however, are clearly local. Also at *Intercisa*, the indigenous parents Ianuarius and Otiouna together and while alive commemorated their two dead children, Otiouna who died at 12 and Regilia, dead at 4 years of age; all four are depicted in portraits (*RIU* 1251; Boatwright 2005, 300, fig. 10.4).

The popularity of family scenes with children amongst the indigenous population had a profound impact also on military families, especially after soldier marriages were recognised under Septimius Severus and recruitment in the army involved tapping into increasingly sedentary military families for fresh manpower. Soldiers often tended to be 'home-grown' recruits by then, and the local popularity of family portraits is reflected in their memorials too. In addition, the legitimacy for wives and children that had been lacking until the Severan army reform of AD 197 may have prompted soldiers to rectify any earlier ambiguities about marriage and celebrate their now legitimate marital unions and offspring in a high-impact and visible way. In fact, the family memorials of serving or retired soldiers from this point on represent a real floruit of the depiction and commemoration of the large and extended *familia*, and the majority of gravestones depicting large families, in fact, come from *Aquincum* and *Intercisa* where strong military contingents were located.

[6] For further examples of mother and infant from Pannonia, but also across the empire, see Carroll 2014.

In this context, the imagery of the mother with her swaddled infant that we have seen in indigenous funerary monuments is repeated on a *stele* from *Intercisa* (Barkóczi 1954, # 60). The mother wears Eraviscan dress, and the child is wrapped in swaddling clothes or a blanket. They are flanked by two men dressed in the military *sagum* indicating that they are soldiers; one of them almost certainly is the husband. The scene, therefore, commemorates not only mother and baby, but also marriage and family structures in frontier society in a military context.

The fragmentary funerary *stele* depicting three men, a woman and three small children from *Aquincum* illustrated in **fig. 5** is fairly typical of the multi-figural family scenes of the period (in this case, early 3rd c.). At *Ulcisia Castra*, Nonius Ianuarius, a veteran of the 2nd legion, stressed the importance of his marriage, family and children, by appearing with three children on the family's gravestone of the mid-3rd c.; he and his wife protectively embrace them (*RIU* 916; Maróti, 2003, 27, # 21). We cannot be certain if he and his dependents were local in origin, but the family of Aurelius Maximus in *Aquincum* certainly was. This legionary veteran, his wife, and his mother were given a monument by his daughter and son-in-law around AD 220-260 (*AE* 1909, 146; *RIU* 719; Schober 1923, # 221; Mander 2013, 108, fig. 93). The women all wear indigenous costume and large wing fibulae, giving their ethnic origin away. Both Aurelius Maximus and his son-in-law served in the same legion. The extended family or household is truly celebrated here.

Even families who were not indigenous to the area adopted the custom of displaying an extended family with more than one child, making use of local sculptors who were adept at carving such scenes. Syrian troops of the *cohors miliaria Hemesenorum* stationed at *Intercisa* from the late 2nd – mid-3rd c. belong to those incoming groups who adopted indigenous Danubian commemorative formulae in format and content (Fitz 1972; Mócsy 1974, 227-230). This unit did not recruit locally, but was replenished repeatedly with troops from the province in which it was raised, almost certainly because these soldiers were archers not readily available elsewhere (Cheesman 1914). Germanius Valens, a soldier in this unit, for example, highlights his wife Aurelia Baracha, two daughters and his mother Immosta on his family's funerary monument in the first half of the 3rd c. (*AE* 1906, 107; *RIU* 1161; Schober 1923, # 198; Nagy 2007, 135, # 146; Scheiber 1983, 36-39; Boatwright 2005, 311, fig. 10.8; Mander 2013, 105, fig. 90). The two daughters of 4 and 2 years of age, both named Aurelia Germanilla probably because one died and was replaced by another daughter), are differentiated slightly in size, suggesting that the stone might have been made to order for them[7].

Fig. 5. Gravestone of a large family in *Aquincum*, early 3rd c. Photo: M. Carroll

Another Syrian family stationed at *Intercisa*, that of Aelius Munatius from *Samosata*, a soldier in the *cohors miliaria Hemesenorum*, set up the most remarkable gravestone of all (*AE* 1906, 110; *RIU* 1153; Boatwright 2005, 287-289, 313, fig. 10.1; Mander 2013, 98, fig. 82). The husband and wife are shown with three small children in front of them, which is not unusual here, but what is remarkable is the depiction of Aurelia Cansauna demonstrably breastfeeding the fourth child, an infant in swaddling clothes! There are no parallels in Pannonia, and only a few marble sarcophagi in Rome depict a child being breastfed (usually by the wet-nurse), but none is this explicit or draws attention to the naked breast so clearly[8]. I have found but one parallel, and that is from *Palmyra* (Budde / Nicholls 1967, # 139, pl. 46). On this 2nd-c. *loculus* slab from a Palmyrene tomb in the Fitzwilliam Museum, a mother lifts her garment and literally points at her bared breast while the child in her arm lays a tiny hand on it. Given the Syrian origin of Aelius

[7] Boatwright 2005, 303, rightly highlights the fact that even if many of the Pannonian stones were prefabricated, the frequent presence of multiple figures and many children indicate the prevalent desire to commemorate the family.

[8] See, for example, the reliefs on the sarcophagus of M. Cornelius Statius: Huskinson 1996, 22, # 1.23, pl. 2.1; Amedick 1991, 140, # 114, pl. 52-53; Carroll 2012, 141-142, fig. 5.

Munatius, perhaps the inspiration for the pose of his (Syrian?) wife is eastern and to be sought in that funerary context[9].

The Family as a Unit in Death

Many, if not most, funerary monuments around the Roman world were erected on someone's death, but memorials could also be commissioned and erected in anticipation of death (Carroll 2006, 86-90, 102-105). In these cases, we can recognise whom the owner of the cemetery plot and monument considered to be members of the burial community and which individuals were to be included in the *familia* for eternity. The gravestones from the Claudian colony of *Savaria* rely almost entirely on inscribed texts, rather than portraits, to convey information about the deceased, and these inscriptions illustrate the practice of familial ante-mortem commemoration particularly well. In the middle of the 2nd c., Quintus Valerius Restitutus, while alive, set up a *stele* for himself, his wife Billiena Donata, his son Valerius Ingenuus, a soldier of the fourteenth legion *Gemina*, and his daughter Valeria Restituta. But only one of this group, the daughter, appears to have already died (at the age of 20); the spaces for the carving of the age at death of the wife and son are blank, indicating that their inclusion for burial was planned for the future (*CIL* III 14066; *RIU* 67; Schober, 1923, # 71). For some reason these details were never completed. Similar blanks can be found on the monument of Gaius Sempronius Marcellinus from *Savaria*, who commissioned it in the second half of the 2nd c. for himself and a variety of other family members, including two sons who died at 21 and 25, and two brothers, one of whom died at 30, as well as his wife (*RIU* 64; Schober 1923, # 139). The age details of the wife and one brother are left blank. The family burial community of Lucius Caesius Tuendus and Petronia Crispina is equally complex and extended (*AE* 1988, 935). This couple, who died at 50 and 45 respectively, were commemorated by various relatives whose ages at death are left blank: they include the man's brother and the couple's two sons and a daughter.

Marcia Marcellina, a mother who had lost four children ranging in age from 22 to 33, erected a monument in the first decades of the 2nd c. for them, her sister-in-law(?) who died at 70, and a 12-year-old boy whose relationship to the family is unclear (*CIL* III 4208; *RIU* 93; Nagy 2007, 36-37, # 21). Marcia Marcellina clearly planned to be buried here herself and she included another daughter who had not yet died; their ages are blank. Again, at *Savaria*, Iulia Priscilla, mother of two, dedicated a stone in the first half of the 3rd c. to her dead husband and she included her two boys, Decrianus and Martinus, neither of whom had yet died and for whom spaces for age at death were left (*AE* 1982, 802; *RIU* 54; Mander 2013, 120, fig. 108).

Conclusion

This study has shown how Roman funerary commemoration at various sites on the middle Danube conveys important information on civilian and military families and extended households. Danubian funerary monuments are informative also on the significance of children and their role in replicating ethnic and gender values of families. The depiction of large family groups and children among the indigenous population is a notable phenomenon, and the popularity of such scenes had a profound impact also on military families, especially after marriages were recognised in the late 2nd c. and soldiers could celebrate their legitimate marital unions and offspring in a visible way. Inscriptions and funerary portraits reveal that the *familia* in death could encompass mother, father, children, aunts, uncles, sisters and brothers, among others; they visualise multi-generational and extended families organised around a nuclear core. As such, these memorials represent a good, if incomplete, reflection of the personal and social bonds maintained in family life in this region.

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[9] Closer to 'home', the motif of the breast-feeding mother goddess or divine nurse is also common on Pannonian votive reliefs from *Poetovio*/Ptuj in the late 2nd and 3rd c., but it is questionable whether these provided the inspiration for the depiction of Aurelia Cansauna. See Šašel-Kos 1999; Wigand 1915.

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Professor Maureen Carroll, FSA
Professor of Roman Archaeology
Department of Archaeology
University of Sheffield
Northgate House
West Street
UK-Sheffield S14ET
p.m.carroll@sheffield.ac.uk